

VZCZCXYZ0018  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAH #1093/01 2930322  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 200322Z OCT 06  
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7916  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
INFO RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY 5453  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 2864  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0416  
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 4980  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/HSE/CCJ5//  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J5/RUE//  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0418  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1285

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001093

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/19/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT NIYAZOV BACKS AWAY FROM FORMAL DIVERT  
AGREEMENT IN MEETING WITH DASD MACDOUGALL AND NSC DIRECTOR  
MERKEL

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Jennifer L. Brush for  
Reasons 1.4 (B) AND (D).

#### SUMMARY

11. (C) During a two-hour meeting October 18 with Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) James MacDougall and NSC Director David Merkel, Turkmenistan's President Niyazov said that he was not prepared to sign a formal divert agreement allowing U.S. planes to make emergency landings at Mary II Airbase. However, he was willing to make an oral agreement to allow "any plane" to land at the airbase "at any time." Niyazov and MacDougall agreed that the Ministry of Defense and the U.S. defense attache office will work out the technical details required to support emergency landings at Mary. The president also suggested that he would respond favorably to a letter from the United Nations General Secretary requesting use of Mary airbase for U.S. and NATO "humanitarian flights;" this option would allow Turkmenistan to cite its support for "peacekeeping operations" when it comes under pressure from Tehran and Moscow to forbid such landings. Niyazov also reiterated the request he made in August to the State Department's Principle Deputy Assistant Secretary Stephen Mann for the U.S. to use its influence to promote a settlement of the territorial dispute between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan in the Caspian Sea. MacDougall and Merkel emphasized the importance of economic and political reform to the future stability of Turkmenistan and the region. The president cited a long list of Turkmenistan's accomplishments, seemingly oblivious to the existence of any problems in the country. In a subsequent meeting, the Minister of Defense Mammetgeldiyev and MacDougall agreed to begin work on a draft exchange of diplomatic notes laying out SOPs for emergency landings. End Summary.

MARY DIVERT AGREEMENT NO LONGER POSSIBLE

¶2. (C) DASD James MacDougall and the NSC's David Merkel met October 18 for two hours with Turkmenistan's President Saparmurat Niyazov to discuss signature of an agreement that would lay out standard operating procedures (SOPs) allowing U.S. military flights to make emergency landings at Turkmenistan's Mary II Airbase. Niyazov had initially proposed the agreement in a 2004 meeting with then-EUR Deputy Assistant Secretary Lynn Pascoe, but asked earlier this year to postpone signature of an agreement until after Iranian President Ahmadinejad's visit in August. Afterwards, MacDougall and Merkel also met with Minister of Defense General Agageldi Mammetgeldiyev and Foreign Minister Rashit Meredov.

¶3. (C) In response to a question from MacDougall, Niyazov said that access to Mary II Airbase would be provided to U.S. and NATO aircraft if there was a need. "We have no intention of refusing (such landing requests); it is only that there cannot be a formal document that can be seen." Niyazov cited pressure from Russia and Iran and reiterated that the Government of Turkmenistan would allow "any plane at any time" to make an emergency landing. Stating that his government would not charge for fueling the plane or seek to "control" the repair area, he asked only that an official from the Government of Turkmenistan could enter the repair area.

¶4. (C) A second option, Niyazov continued, was for the new United Nations General Secretary to write a letter to Turkmenistan requesting use of the Mary II Airbase for "humanitarian flights." A letter, which would make clear the base was being used only for "peacekeeping operations," was a "good option" for Turkmenistan and would give his country the political cover it needed to allow U.S. and NATO aircraft to land. The letter would also allow the fact of

Turkmenistan's participation in a humanitarian action to be made public.

¶5. (C) Thanking Niyazov for his forward-leaning position, MacDougall clarified that the president was granting the U.S. permission to land planes in emergency situations at the Mary II Airbase. He also said that the president's second option might also be a good idea -- and one which NATO would find interesting -- because NATO's contribution to Afghanistan was increasing. However, MacDougall added, the UN option would take longer, and would have to be carefully thought through, since Russia could exercise its veto within the UN Security Council. Niyazov pointed out that a letter from the General Secretary would only need agreement within the General

SIPDIS  
Assembly, and not Security Council approval. MacDougall agreed to explore the UN option, while also moving ahead on a bilateral basis.

¶6. (C) In his subsequent meeting with the Minister of Defense, MacDougall, referring to the president's agreement to allow U.S. planes to land at Mary, noted the importance of having SOPs in place ahead of time in order to ensure both sides shared a mutual understanding of the steps that should be taken in handling any emergency landing. Rather than sign an agreement, he proposed, the two sides should study the agreement and consider an exchange of diplomatic notes outlining SOPs. The minister agreed, and suggested that his attache for international affairs should work with the embassy's defense attache to develop these documents for review by both sides. MacDougall agreed.

IRAN, THE NUCLEAR THREAT FROM THE SOUTH...

¶7. (C) MacDougall stated that any possible link up of terrorists and nuclear weapons was a major concern to the United States. He thanked the president for his support in

counter-terrorism and non-proliferation areas, specifically for denying overflight clearance to suspect Iranian planes. The president noted that Turkmenistan had condemned Iran's nuclear program, but "they are cunning." That said, Niyazov added, it was quite obvious that Iran's nuclear program is not oriented toward peace. Although it was unclear how strongly Russia supported Iran, it was significant that Moscow still had not condemned Tehran's activities. "We support your opposition to Iran, but we don't make a big thing of that support. However, we can openly condemn North Korea," he said. The president also noted that, when President Ahmadinejad had been in town, he had threatened to attack any Central Asian country that allowed itself to be used as a platform for a U.S. attack against Iran. Ahmadinejad had also talked about 40,000 Iranian trucks crossing into Turkmenistan and had been indignant about the careful scrutiny of Iranian trucks at the Turkmenistan border. But, Niyazov continued, "we know they are here watching everything, and we have to check out the trucks."

18. (C) During a subsequent meeting with MacDougall, the Minister of Defense went even further. Asking MacDougall about U.S. plans for addressing Iran's growing nuclear threat, he did not seem to believe that the diplomatic measures that the United States was taking would persuade Iran to reverse its course. He noted that Iran's development of nuclear weapons could trigger flows of refugees and other problems for the region and stressed Niyazov's position that there should be no weapons of mass destruction in the region. "Nobody wants Iran to develop nuclear weapons; it would have a negative impact on the region.... They can have an army and weapons, but we want Iran to remain nuclear-free."

...AND RUSSIA, THE MANIPULATOR FROM THE NORTH

19. (C) Niyazov also expressed suspicion of Russian maneuvering

in the region. Noting the meeting of heads of Caspian littoral states that would take place in Tehran on October 31, President Niyazov said that President Putin had called him on October 17 to find out whether there would be agreement from Iran, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan on Caspian Sea boundaries. If the answer was "yes," then Putin would attend the conference. However, Niyazov continued, it was clear that neither Iran nor Russia was interested in resolving the territorial disputes in the Caspian Sea because those disputes were good for their countries. Niyazov also indicated that Moscow had been pushing Ashgabat to allow the Russians to establish a naval base near Turkmenbashi, arguing that the United States was increasing its presence in Baku. "We argue we are neutral, but it is very complicated to argue with Russia," he said. Russia was suspicious and wanted more privileges in Turkmenistan, but the president claimed he was using his policy of non-interference to counter those proposals.

U.S. COOPERATION ON MARITIME SECURITY?

10. (C) MacDougall reported to President Niyazov that the United States was cooperating with Azerbaijan on a maritime security program directed toward helping Azerbaijan develop its own Coast Guard capabilities. Notwithstanding Russian claims, the United States has no plans to establish a base in the Caspian region.

However, he suggested, as bilateral cooperation between the United States and Turkmenistan continued to increase, the United States might be able to help Turkmenistan, too, to strengthen its own maritime security.

#### NIYAZOV REQUESTS U.S. ASSISTANCE WITH AZERBAIJAN

¶11. (C) Niyazov asked for the United States to use its influence to help settle the disputes over Caspian Sea boundaries so that the rich hydrocarbon reserves in the Caspian Sea could be extracted. Noting that the remaining Caspian disputes were between Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Iran, the president indicated that it would be easier to counter Iran's claim to 20% of the Caspian if Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan were able to resolve their disputes: That way, "if anybody (like Russia) were still to support Iran's claims, it could come out of their territory."

#### NIYAZOV ON HIS NEIGHBORS: GENGHIS KHAN, TAMERLANE AND THE "MONGOLOID"

¶12. (C) When asked about Turkmenistan's relations with its neighbors, Niyazov had little good to say. All Central Asian countries have serious social and economic problems that came both from the personalities of their leaders and from the development courses that the countries had chosen. Niyazov was proud of the fact that only Turkmenistan had turned down the IMF's loan offer in the 1990's, and he claimed that none of the leaders was paying

enough attention to internal development. Characterizing Kazakhstan's Nazarbayev as "Genghis Khan," Uzbekistan's Karimov as "Tamerlane" and Tajikistan's Rahmonov as "a Mongoloid," the president seemed to believe that only Turkmenistan was on the right track of stable economic and political development. That said, he expressed an interest in finding a mechanism which would allow only the five Central Asian countries and Afghanistan to cooperate on an equal footing on many regional issues.

¶13. (C) Returning later to the issue of Nazarbayev, he described Kazakhstan's president as a "two-faced individual who can change his position on any agreement in a week or two." Politically, Nazarbayev believes that he is Genghis Khan and is focused on Russia and the CIS. "I sometimes scold him, because I'm two months older." However, Niyazov continued, Nazarbayev has been president for a long time, and was quite smart. Niyazov said that he has known both Nazarbayev and Karimov for a long time, and Nazarbayev is "better" than Karimov. While it was possible to work with Nazarbayev, it was best to be as powerful as the United States or Russia; otherwise, the situation can become "very cold very quickly."

#### U.S. EMPHASIZES NEED FOR DEMOCRATIC AND ECONOMIC REFORM

¶14. (C) In all three meetings, MacDougall and Merkel emphasized the importance of democratic and economic reform, alongside efforts to strengthen security. With President Niyazov, Merkel stressed that the United States valued cooperation in three areas: security, economic reform and democracy building. President Bush believes that long-term stability comes from democracy. With the Minister of Defense, MacDougall and Merkel pressed for stronger Turkmenistan participation in regional fora and urged Turkmenistan to take advantage of all educational exchange opportunities. With Foreign Minister Meredov, they expanded these points; Merkel also urged the Foreign Minister to investigate the circumstances of journalist Ogulsapar Myradova's death and to make the results public.

#### COMMENT

¶15. (C) That President Niyazov has had second thoughts about a formal divert agreement is hardly surprising, given the pressure he clearly has been receiving from both Tehran and Moscow. Based on the president's assurances that any plane will be allowed to land at Mary II Airbase, we agree that work on an exchange of diplomatic notes outlining SOPs be concluded soonest, in order to ensure that the exchange goes forward while memories of the president's comments

remain fresh.

#### BIO NOTE

¶16. (C) Niyazov appeared healthy and focused throughout the entire meeting. This is particularly significant given his almost daily appearances at openings related to Independence Day (on October 19 he will open the "Turkmen Fairy Tales" theme park and on October 20 he will open another new theater in Ashgabat, accompanied by simultaneous televised openings in four regional capitals.) He resumed wearing the huge gaudy jewelry he had temporarily stopped wearing, or at least had not worn during his August meeting with PDAS Mann. He clearly enjoyed this opportunity to show off to Americans the depth of his grasp of issues related to Turkmenistan, and actually seemed to regret having to say goodbye after only two hours.

#### TROUTMAN